



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly breaks ground for Chinle Denny's, lauds Navajo-owned business



President Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly broke ground for the new Denny's restaurant in Chinle. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

CHINLE, Ariz.—This morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and First Lady Martha Shelly broke ground for a new Denny's restaurant in Chinle.

The site of the restaurant is located adjacent to the Program for Self Reliance office.

The celebration began with a traditional Navajo blessing. Participants blessed themselves with Tádííín (corn pollen) and the site of the restaurant.

Navajo businessman Romero Brown joined President Shelly for groundbreaking ceremony.

Also participating in the shovel ceremony were President-Elect Russell Begaye and Vice President-Elect Jonathan Nez. Chapter president Andy Ayze and chapter vice president Myron McLaughlin participated, along with tribal officials from Division of Economic Development and the Navajo

Nation Council.

The group took photos at the site of the Denny's restaurant before convening at the Chinle Chapter House for the festivities.

President Shelly said, "I would like to thank Romero Brown for having the courage to step forward and start a new business here in Chinle. I want to also thank Albert Damon and the hardworking staff at the Division of Economic Development."

Denny's will undoubtedly be a success, the president said, because Navajos love to eat. He said the Shelly-Jim administration pushed for innovative ideas for businesses during their term of office.

Projects like the Thoreau Rail Port, Narbona Growth Fund and federal EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program provided "out of the box" thinking to address the challenges of starting a business

on the Navajo Nation, he said.

"We must work with our small businesses for the benefit of the Navajo Nation. These businesses create new jobs and stimulate the economy," President Shelly said. "It gives me great pleasure to break ground for a new Navajo-owned business. Ahe'hee."

Romero Brown said work on the Denny's project began in 2008. He noted that President Shelly's involvement made the project a reality.

"We probably gave up three or four times. Native American Bank wanted to build this back in 2009, but after the economic crash they pulled back," Brown said. "It sure is hard to build a business on the Navajo Nation."

The Division of Economic Development and Regional Business Development Office stepped forward to help the Navajo entrepreneur. The Navajo

Nation provided \$341,000 for the project. Native American Bank provided \$2,150,000.

"When we build this Denny's, it's going to have 100 permanent employees. There will be 230 temporary construction jobs. We're going to pay about \$1 million per year in payroll. Then we're going to pay the Navajo Tax Commission about \$150,000 per year," Brown said.

Construction will take six months and the anticipated completion date is Oct. 17.

"In October, we'll have some Grand Slams," Brown said.

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